

## **Costa Mesa Fire one of the lead agencies on trench rescue training**

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue was the co-lead agency to facilitate a countywide trench rescue class where several specialized rescue teams met to review the latest protocols related to trench rescues.

Trench rescues are a low frequency, high-risk emergency where the potential for first responder injury is heightened.

Crews practiced putting shores in place in order to affect a rescue of a victim trapped.

---

## **Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue's Jon Neal promoted to Assistant Fire Marshal**

Jon Neal, Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue's Code Enforcement Officer, has been promoted to the position of Assistant Fire Marshal.

He began his formal assignment on Monday, Oct. 30. This new position was approved during the FY 2017-18 budget process, taking the place of the Fire Protection Analyst position, and it is in-line with the goals and objectives established within the department's Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

"We look forward to Jon's leadership role increasing as our Assistant Fire Marshal," Chief Dan Stefano said. "The range

and depth of Jon's skill sets and experience that he has demonstrated serving our country, in different industry sectors, and within the City of Costa Mesa are tremendous assets for our organization. We have an incredibly talented and hardworking team who is redefining what effectiveness and efficiency look like when innovation is infused as a core value within that framework and Jon embodies that mindset."

Neal's commitment to public service began when he enlisted in the United States Coast Guard immediately after high school, where he served as a firefighter on the USCGC Alert, a 210-foot cutter, among other assignments. Upon completion of his active duty in 2004, Neal worked as the inventory control manager for three years at Active Ride Shop, which was followed by his service in Gulu, Uganda, as a logistics manager for Invisible Children, a non-profit organization.

Neal joined the Fire & Rescue team in 2015 in the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Division and he has done an outstanding job of serving in a number of areas ever since, from fire and life safety to plan review to code adoption and much more.

His initial work in Costa Mesa began in 2008, when he was hired as the city's storekeeper, working in the Corporation Yard warehouse. Thereafter, as part of the organization's restructuring, Neal went on to fill a range of vacant positions within the Public Services Department Maintenance Services Division.

In 2012, he was promoted to Code Enforcement Officer in the Community Improvement Division where he was tasked with coordinating and leading the multi-agency Hotel/Motel Taskforce, which also included presenting cases to the Planning Commission and City Council that led to C.U.P. revocations.

Neal has also earned a number of California State Fire Marshal Certifications and is nearing completion of his Bachelor's

Degree in Fire Science Management from American Military University.

---

## **Chief Dan Stefano honored with Spurgeon Award from local Explorer organization**

Exploring of Orange County presented Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano with the organization's Spurgeon Award, citing his commitment to youth and impressive record of community service and outstanding leadership to Explorer programs.

Stefano received the award at Exploring Orange County's 28<sup>th</sup> annual Spurgeon luncheon on Friday Oct. 20. Also honored were Orange County Sheriff Sgt. Dan Daniels and Jeff Snow, municipal services director for Republic Services.

"Our Explorer programs provide incredibly valued opportunities for us to connect with the youth of our community," Chief Stefano said. "The sustained success of Costa Mesa's Explorer programs is only possible with the engaged support provided throughout all levels of our organization. At the end of the day, it is about helping our youth develop their leadership, character and life skill sets."

Stefano has been the Costa Mesa Fire Chief since 2013. Prior to that he served for 18 years in the Laguna Beach Fire Department where he held several roles starting with Reserve Firefighter to Fire Division Chief, Training and EMS Chief and Fire Marshal.

Stefano has the distinction of being the state's 32<sup>nd</sup> Certified

Fire Chief through the Office of the State Fire Marshal and he also holds the designation of Chief Fire Officer through the Center of Public Safety Excellence.

Exploring of Orange County serves about 1,300 youth in more than 60 explorer posts throughout the county, which provides young people with opportunities to explore career paths, many in public safety and law enforcement.



Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue has managed Explorer Post 400 since 1996, which is led by Capt. Rob Gagne, Engineer Steve Cathey and Engineer Eliasar Maldonado. All of them were explorers before being hired as full-time professional firefighters.

In addition to Stefano being honored, Costa Mesa Fire Explorer and Intern Moises Vaca and Costa Mesa Police Explorer Citlaly Gomez received the 2017 Young American Award scholarship presented by the Orange County Council Boy Scouts of America. The Young American Award is presented to an Explorer who is recognized as a leader within their Explorer Post.

A graduate of Aliso Viejo High School in 2013, Vaca attended the Fire Tech Program at Santa Ana College and was a Fire Explorer with Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue from 2015-2017. He received the department's Explorer of the Year award in 2016. He currently is a Fire Explorer Advisor for the Costa Mesa Department and a Fire Prevention Volunteer Intern.

Gomez, a graduate of Costa Mesa High School, joined the Costa Mesa Police Explorer program in July of 2012 and has risen through the ranks and is currently a captain supervising 37 Explorers. She has volunteered 3,870 hours in her five years as an explorer and has received numerous awards.

---

## **Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Team Member of the Month – Battalion Chief Kevin Diamond**

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue's Team Member of the Month is a person who serves the community with Passion, Professionalism, & Pride.

This month, Battalion Chief (BC) Kevin Diamond is the focus profile of the month.

Diamond was born in Michigan and with his dad being an electrical engineer who was in sales for a company now known as Siemens, he has lived in several places, including New Jersey and San Mateo, Calif. before settling in Corona del Mar at the age of 14. His mother was in cosmetic sales for the now defunct Broadway department store.

After graduating from Corona del Mar High School in 1983, Diamond's goal was to become an airline pilot. However, while lifeguarding one summer, he took an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) class and his career goals took a turn.

After completing his EMT class, Diamond went to work for Seals Ambulance and knew it was a good fit for him. While working at Seals Ambulance, he met a friend named Dave Thomas (retired Asst. Chief from OCFA) who encouraged him to pursue a career as a firefighter/paramedic.

Diamond was hired with the City of Santa Ana in 1987, where he honed his craft as a paramedic. Before coming to Costa Mesa in 1990, he worked for Laguna Beach Fire Department as a firefighter/paramedic. While with Costa Mesa, BC Diamond has held the rank of Firefighter/Paramedic, Captain, and Battalion Chief.

BC Diamond is a true leader who enjoys teaching, coaching, and mentoring. He not only teaches, coaches and mentors past, present and current Costa Mesa firefighters but also teaches for other organizations, such as Santa Ana College and private organizations offering professional development/leadership classes for the fire service.

Diamond has assisted countless individuals to successfully prepare for promotional tests.

Additional achievements include assisting in the implementation of our Arson Investigation unit, active instructor for our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Citizen Fire Academy's (CFA), and significant contributions to improving firefighter safety through a company he founded, Breaking The Accident Chain (BTAC). Additionally, he is an example to those he mentors as he achieved his master's degree from Columbia Southern University in Emergency Services Management.

Diamond is married to his wife Jenni, who works as a case

worker for Run to Rescue. Together, they have two twin boys (20-years old) who were accomplished soccer players in high school and now hope to follow in their dad's footsteps as they are currently attending a local fire academy. Diamond enjoys eating out, going to movies, and family trips.

---

## **Fire & Rescue crew member Jeff Bibler promoted to fire captain**

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue announced that Firefighter/Paramedic Jeff Bibler has been promoted to Captain.

Bibler fills the gap left by longtime Capt. Bruce Pulgencio, who retired earlier this month.

"Captain Bibler is the right person at the right time to replace Capt. Pulgencio," Chief Dan Stefano said. "Our team is extremely fortunate to have such strong quality and depth with our future leadership and Jeff is a shining example of exactly that."

This past week, family, friends, and members of Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue team gathered in their tradition of celebrating the first day of promotion.

Those gathered watched as Chief Stefano pinned the Captain's badge on Bibler's chest and the entire Command Staff joined in with his collar brass pinning and the presentation of his Captain helmets.

Bibler has been a member of the Costa Mesa team since 2003. Prior to joining Costa Mesa, Bibler served at both the

Montebello Fire Department and the Orange County Fire Authority.

Bibler's contributions to Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue include serving as a founding member of our EMS Committee, Academy Instructor and Paramedic Preceptor, among others.

In addition, Bibler previously served as an Executive Board Member for the Costa Mesa Firefighters Association.

Bibler earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Applied Studies from Brandman University, is a graduate of the California Fire Chiefs Training Officers Fire Command College, and has demonstrated strong leadership skill sets.

---

## **Cheryl Wills is named Fire & Rescue's August Team Member of the Month**

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue announced that Community Risk Reductions Specialist Cheryl Wills is the Team Member of the Month

The department honors members of the team who serve the community with Passion, Professionalism and Pride.

Wills grew up in Fountain Valley where her father worked in construction, specializing in HVAC systems. Her mother was a K – 4th grade teacher, and she has two older sisters.

After graduating from Mater Dei High School where she was a stand out cheerleader who competed on a national level, Wills attended Orange Coast College and Santa Ana College, where she



completed several fire science classes. In 1992 she graduated from Rio Hondo's Fire Academy and was hire by Monterey Park Fire Department in 1994 where she was the first paid female firefighter in the San Gabriel Valley.

After four years as a firefighter, Wills' mom was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. With her mom's diagnosis and wanting to start a family of her own, she struggled with balancing family demands and her work schedule (firefighters work 24 hours shifts). It was at this time she decided to pursue a different career path within the fire service so she could spend time with her mom and start her own family.

Wills transferred to Fire Prevention (Community Risk Reduction) with Monterey Park Fire Department. In 2002, she was hired with Costa Mesa Fire Department (Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue) as a Fire Protection Specialist – Public Education, now an Inspector.

Notable achievements during her tenure with Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue include, but are not limited to: teaching the first Citizens Fire Academy in 2003, Overachiever Fire Civilian of the Year – 2004, Excellence in Work Performance Award – 2009, and Key Note Speaker at Ferragamo Breast Cancer where she received a standing ovation!; She also assists with our annual toy drives for less fortunate kids and is a member of Women Leading Government.

Wills is married to her husband Steve, who is a K-9 officer with Los Angeles Police Department and a Navy Veteran. They have two children Brock and Nicole.

---

# Costa Mesa Fire Prevention Specialist visits China

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue's Fire Prevention Specialist Brenda Emrick recently returned from a week long trip to China.

The recent trip included eight days of instructor development to provide U.S. representatives the expertise needed to observe and support previously trained CERT China instructors in delivering a basic CERT course to a Beijing audience

---

# Preparation continues for fire season

Firefighters continue to prepare for what is predicted to be an active fire season.

As part of their training, firefighters are performing progressive hose lays (used when we have to travel long distances, sometimes over 1000') and exercising their communications plan.

Additionally, each firefighter is required to deploy their fire shelter, which is a last resort if they find themselves in a burn over situation.

---

# Fire academy recruits train for live fire techniques

Costa Mesa Fire and Rescue recruits continue to progress in their academy training. Recently, the academy cadre was led by Captain Joe Noceti and the recruits trained with live fire. Recruits learned about fire behavior, fire attack principles and the dangers of attacking a fire.

Some of the recruits had eyes as wide as saucers as this was their first time attacking a fire in a controlled environment.

---

# Fire and Rescue teams to take part in the Emergency Operations Exercise at John Wayne Airport

On Friday, April 14, John Wayne Airport will be conducting a Triennial Emergency Operations Exercise from the hours of 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. This full-scale exercise is mandated by the FAA and is designed to evaluate the operational capability of the emergency management system in a stressful environment.

The [Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Department](#) will be an active participant with a number of other agencies in this drill since we share a border with the John Wayne Airport and routinely respond to emergencies on the airport campus.

The public should be aware that Airway Avenue will be shut down from Baker to Paularino from approximately 8 a.m. to 12

noon to accommodate the exercise. Also, the CMPD Helipad will be used during the exercise.

This is an excellent readiness exercise for the airport and CMF&R is a proud participant. It will increase interagency operations and communication between all the public and private resources. Most importantly it will enhance the safety and security for the tenants and passengers using the airport.

---

## **Fire & Rescue team pushes ahead with new fire engines in time-honored fashion**

The Fire & Rescue team has announced the arrival of two new fire engines as part of an upgrade to the department's fleet.

The public will get a chance to see the new engines, which will be on display Tuesday March 7 in front of City Council Chambers during the City Council meeting.

When the engines first arrived, members of the department honored an old tradition of physically pushing the engine into the station.

In addition, the department said a prayer with Police/Fire Chaplain Mike Decker.



“Early hand drawn fire engines, ladder wagons, hose carts, were physically pushed back into the station by hand after calls for service,” Fire Chief Dan Stefano said. “The horse drawn steam engines that followed could be backed up by the engineers, but it was difficult to align the steam connections on the engine with those in the station, so the horses were disconnected and the steamers were also often pushed back into the station by hand.”

While not every department continues in the tradition, Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue team has preserved that fire history.

“Ultimately, we evolved when our engines had motorized horsepower,” Stefano said. “But the fire service lives and breathes in tradition, and in an effort to honor and pay tribute our past, the new engine barn push in is executed by some.”

---

# City urges residents to brace for yet another winter squall expected to hit Costa Mesa

City staff is urging residents to prep for a fierce winter storm that is expected to bring high winds and drench Costa Mesa and surrounding communities with as a much as two inches of rain.

To help with potential flooding, the city is providing sandbags to residents only and not for commercial use. Also, sandbags are limited to 15 per resident.

The city offers a pre-filled sandbag station at the Southeast corner of the City Hall parking lot at at 77 Fair Drive while supplies last. There are signs on Fair Drive that will direct residents to the location.

Residents can also fill up sandbags at Fire Station No. 4 located at 2300 Placentia Ave. Bags and sand will be available for free, but please bring ID to show to City staff before picking up the bags.

Click [here for information on how to prepare](#) sand bags.

Further, the city has added additional maintenance crews for Friday and Saturday to assist with emergencies.

Residents are urged to drive safely, watch for downed trees and power lines and be prepared for potential flooding. Residents who are in need of assistance are encouraged to call the city's non-emergency line at 714-754-5252.

As always, in the case of emergencies, downed power lines or other life threatening issues, please dial 9-1-1.

In anticipation of the storm, County officials have issued a

Flash Flood Watch and High Wind Watch for both Coastal and Inland Orange County. Please click on the links below for further information on these alerts:

[High Wind Watch in effect from February 17, 07:00 AM PST until February 18, 07:00 AM PST](#)

[Flash Flood Watch in effect from February 17, 12:00 PM PST until February 18, 04:00 PM PST](#)

Click [here to see how to contact Southern California Edison](#) or call 1-800-611-1911 to report power outages.

The agency "211 OC" is also poised to help coordinate assistance. 211 OC has an around the clock phone line to help with all types of emergencies and provides regional connection to resources for disasters victims, the homeless, and others needing health and human services.

Information about 211 OC can be found at [www.2110C.org](http://www.2110C.org) or by simply calling 2-1-1.